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Humanitarian affairs segment

Provisional summary record of the 34th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 16 July 2013, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Khan (Vice-President) ..... (Pakistan)

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

Panel discussion: Reducing vulnerability, improving capacities and managing risks: an approach for humanitarian and development actors to work together

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In the absence of Mr. Osorio (Colombia), Mr. Khan (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

Panel discussion: Reducing vulnerability, improving capacities and managing risks: an approach for humanitarian and development actors to work together

The President invited the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to act as moderator.

Ms. Amos (Moderator) said that 2012 had been the third consecutive year in which natural disasters had caused upwards of US$ 100 billion in damage. The figures were expected to continue to rise because of the impact of climate change, environmental degradation, rising poverty, food insecurity, water scarcity, unplanned urbanization and population growth in disaster-prone areas. There was a need to reorient the system so that humanitarian and development actors and Governments worked together to reduce and manage risks rather than simply responding to crises once they had hit. To manage risks a systematic approach must be taken to dealing with uncertainty and minimizing harm and losses. The first step was to identify risk factors. Then develop strategies to address them through mechanisms such as early warning measures, livelihood support programmes and insurance schemes.

Governments shouldered most of the responsibility for tackling risk and for building resilience over the long term, but humanitarian organizations could make a crucial contribution to risk analyses, disaster preparedness, the development of early warning systems and early recovery processes. The resilience approach currently being taken in the Sahel was an example of how plans to promote sustainable development could be aligned and the cycle of crisis and recovery broken. However, risk management was chronically underfunded. Between 2005 and 2011, a mere 3 per cent of the US$ 78 billion spent on humanitarian assistance had gone to disaster prevention and preparedness. More needed to be done in that area.

Explaining that the panel discussion was intended to be interactive, she invited attendees to take part in a poll, via text message, on what they considered to represent the greatest benefit of a risk-management and vulnerability-reduction approach. The results would be made available by the end of the meeting.

Mr. Idrees (Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that Pakistan was prone to devastating natural disasters. For example, monsoon rains had become increasingly erratic and intense and were affecting new parts of the country. In the wake of the 2005 earthquake, the State had established a more proactive disaster management system to tackle the lack of risk assessment in planning and the problems of poorly constructed infrastructure, inadequate search and rescue capacity and limited community awareness. Through the system, which involved an array of institutions operating at the federal and provincial levels, pre- and post-disaster management activities were undertaken.

Efforts to establish a proactive system had been hindered by limited resources and a succession of disasters of unprecedented magnitude, notably flash floods in what were normally arid regions. In addition, gaps had been identified in capacity-building, local management of relief assistance, multi-hazard assessments, the alignment of land registries, land-use planning, building codes, long-term weather forecasting and capacity to establish a disaster response force. Pakistan had nonetheless made considerable progress in areas such

as institutional strengthening, training and preparedness, contingency planning, community-based disaster management and the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in development policies. In February 2013, a national disaster management plan had been adopted and work had begun to devise community-based disaster relief management guidelines.

Mr. Pratomo (Founder of Jalin Merapi Community Radio, Indonesia), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that he wished to describe the situation of the communities living close to the volcano on Mount Merapi on the island of Java. The volcano was on a four-year cycle and eruptions, though rare, were devastating because of the volcano's proximity to areas of human habitation. The Jalin Merapi network had been founded in 2006 to raise awareness of imminent risks and ensure better communication during crises. The network consisted of eight community radio stations and thousands of volunteers who monitored the activity of the volcano in tandem with the authorities and NGOs. The volunteers communicated with one another by two-way radio and through social networks. All the information that they provided, such as maps of evacuation camps, were uploaded onto a single website. Thanks to its ability to gain access to timely and reliable information, Jalin Merapi served as an intermediary between donors and aid agencies and recipients. It had also forged ties with communities around other active Indonesian volcanoes. Network members had learned about the importance of involving all stakeholders, of using technology and the media and of enlisting the population to provide accurate information.

Mr. Sørensen (Director-General of the European Community Humanitarian Office) said that the example of Jalin Merapi was very interesting and that the European Commission had only recently begun to use crowdsourcing to gather information on developing crises.

Recounting a recent visit to the Sahel region, he said that nutrition centres were receiving growing numbers of severely malnourished children. The reason was that many farmers had had to sell their land and grain stocks to survive earlier droughts and had thus lost their livelihoods. The problem was a structural one, a question of maladapted agricultural policy and inadequate social safety nets. A humanitarian response to such crises was insufficient: it was crucial to tackle the root causes.

Eighty per cent of humanitarian aid provided by the European Union was used to tackle protracted humanitarian crises. Unless the root causes of those crises were addressed, emergency response and relief operations would be underfunded in the long term. National development plans should be signed locally, supported by regional organizations and include actions to build resilience. Priorities should include the development of sustainable agriculture and water, health and social safety networks to help vulnerable populations to live through the lean season without having to sell off the very thing that was the basis of their livelihoods.

Complementarity was crucial to increasing the effectiveness and the geographical coverage of humanitarian activities. Humanitarian agencies should consider extending their post-emergency presence in order to support development partners as they made the transition from relief to development. Dialogue and cooperation between humanitarian agencies and development partners was sometimes hampered by the multiplicity of actors, but had improved and must be made a priority.

Mr. Bostrom (Director of the Future of Humanity Institute and the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, University of Oxford) said that, when seen in a wider context, the number of disaster-related deaths in any given year was low compared with the overall annual number of deaths worldwide. The best approach was to do as much as possible in the situation, and to identify the most cost-effective life-saving measures. The distribution of mosquito nets to combat malaria, for example, was inexpensive and effective

compared with other, more elaborate initiatives. He proposed that an evaluation should be made of how many lives were saved per dollar spent on a given programme and priorities set accordingly. Instead of designing new, innovative measures, it might be preferable for stakeholders to use direct cash transfers so that affected populations could invest in what they deemed the most pressing need and cut out intermediaries.

While preventing problems was certainly preferable to remedying them, the benefits of resilience-building were difficult to quantify. That said, stockpiling food to help a community to get through the lean season might have a more measurable impact than institution-building, for example. Coordination was also crucial and the United Nations and other international organizations played an important coordinating role when it came to dealing with global emergencies such as pandemics.

Two constituencies which were mostly ignored when humanitarian action was discussed were animals and future generations. The suffering endured by animals in mass production, for example, could be relieved if simple, cost effective measures such as rules on minimum cage space were to be introduced. Future generations were facing a risk that threatened the very existence of humanity. Some experts suggested that there was a 19 per cent chance of human extinction by the end of the century, which was a pressing argument for action. Considering the number of lives on the line, any measures that could be taken to reduce that risk would be far more effective in terms of lives saved than even the most effective work of a humanitarian charity.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom) said that a 20-year study conducted in Kenya had shown that for each dollar spent on resilience 2.9 dollars had been saved on humanitarian expenditure. The United Kingdom Department for International Development was committed to incorporating disaster-resilience measures into all country programmes by 2015. The essential elements of effective disaster risk management were shared multi-hazard risk assessments, joint planning, multi-year humanitarian spending plans, flexible programming and cooperation between humanitarian and development actors. She wished to hear the panellists' views on practical ways to bridge the gap between relief and development. She wondered whether the current aid architecture was suited to bringing humanitarian and development actors together.

With regard to the difficulties described by the Director of the National Disaster Management Authority of Pakistan, she suggested that the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) might be able to assist with more accurate long-term weather forecasting. She also enquired how the lessons learned in different countries could be collated and made available to others. Could cash transfers be used to speed up the delivery of humanitarian responses to disasters?

Ms. Goldberg (Canada) said that her Government supported the focus on resilience. She asked whether an extended post-emergency presence of humanitarian agencies might not overstretch the humanitarian system, and what criteria would be used to decide whether relief agencies should stay or leave. Commending Pakistan on its response to the 2005 earthquake, she asked whether the 2013 national disaster management plan provided for the involvement of women and vulnerable groups in disaster risk management at the provincial and district levels. She also highlighted the role of risk insurance in the management of recurrent disasters.

Mr. Okada (Japan) said that disaster preparedness and mitigation were linked to the building of a disaster-resilient society. The incorporation of a risk-reduction perspective in development and disaster recovery, with the involvement of a wide range of local, national and international stakeholders, was also crucial. He welcomed efforts to enhance cooperation between humanitarian and development agencies, including the development of the draft Common Framework for National Capacity Development for Emergency

Preparedness and the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience.

Mr. Hilmersson (Sweden) said that while humanitarian agencies played an important role in cooperative efforts to build resilience, government leadership was crucial to creating the conditions for resilience. Joint risk and vulnerability analysis and better data collection and sharing were also critical. The Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative and the multi-year Common Assessment Framework were commendable achievements, and he asked panellists if they could give further examples of cooperation between humanitarian and development agencies. He would be particularly interested to learn of the experience of Pakistan in cooperating with the United Nations system in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake. More flexible and predictable funding would certainly enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian operations, and he asked for panellists' views on more suitable funding architectures. The difficulty in quantifying the benefits of prevention should not be viewed as an obstacle to resilience-building efforts.

Mr. Eriza (Indonesia) said that in 2009 Indonesia had launched a programme to build disaster-resilient villages that involved a series of capacity-building activities in pilot villages that were prone to different types of disasters. The goal was to help local governments and communities to build resilience in order to deal with the specific disasters that they faced. By the end of 2012, some 1,023 villages had achieved some degree of resilience, through the design of hazard maps, designation of evacuation routes and construction of shelters. The programme had been recognized as a best practice model at the Fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2012.

Mr. Sørensen (Director-General, European Community Humanitarian Office) said that a new aid architecture should be designed to include cooperation among all donors, including the international financial institutions. National development plans and humanitarian strategic plans must be evaluated on the basis of their impact at the village level. An extended presence of humanitarian actors in disaster-stricken countries would certainly stretch the humanitarian system to its limits, but facilitate useful cooperation between humanitarian and development actors.

With regard to the difficulty of measuring the benefits of resilience, he said that in Northern Kenya malnutrition rates in local communities that had been trained in drought management, fishing and horticulture, among others, were 25 per cent lower than in neighbouring communities. European Union-led resilience-building efforts had helped to improve dialogue between development and humanitarian actors and geographical coverage and complementarity of humanitarian operations. Most Sahel countries that benefited from the European Development Fund had made food security and agriculture a development priority.

Mr. Idrees (Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority) said that Pakistan already cooperated extensively with WMO, but long-term weather forecasting capabilities were limited everywhere. The possibility of extreme weather events could not be ruled out, and hazards such as flash floods were not always predictable. Pakistan had developed a flash-flood early-warning system and its national disaster management plan had been formulated in close cooperation with Japanese experts.

Pakistan highly recommended the idea of extending the presence of humanitarian actors to ensure sustainability of relief. In its view, early recovery support initiatives should be linked to long-term reconstruction and development measures, including resilience-building. Following the 2005 earthquake, His Government had included earthquake resilience conditions in the criteria for providing compensation for damage to housing.

The Authority had established cells dealing specifically with women and children. In all disaster response situations, humanitarian relief partners were provided with instructions on the specific aid needs of women and children. The Authority was looking at how to improve public-sector risk financing and was working with the World Bank on mechanisms such as catastrophe-drawdown options. It was also close to finalizing work on insurance safety nets for areas that were especially prone to natural disaster.

The Authority worked closely with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on contingency plans to deal with the monsoon season, for example. Officials were being trained in such areas as aid distribution, camp management and the special needs of vulnerable groups. The National Disaster Management Commission had decided to allocate 2 per cent of federal budget development spending to disaster risk reduction. The introduction of a dedicated budget line for disaster risk prevention and management was being considered.

Mr. Pratomo (Founder of Jalin Merapi Community Radio, Indonesia) said that donors should take stock of the capacities and not only the vulnerabilities of communities hit by disasters. Local communities were capable of assessing needs and reacting to emergency situations. Raising disaster awareness in communities was fundamental, as were good lines of communication between them and Governments and NGOs.

Mr. Bostrom (Director of the Future of Humanity Institute and the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, University of Oxford) said that it was not difficult to measure improvements in resilience in communities when resilience-building efforts were synonymous with improvements in communities' overall standard of living. What was more difficult to gauge was the long-term benefits of providing one-off windfalls to communities. The importance of measuring the effectiveness of any relief and development activities should not be underestimated, as it was only through analysis that the appropriateness of a given approach could be gauged. Governments and relief agencies should learn from the experience of the reinsurance industry with regard to disaster and risk finance and perhaps emulate its modelling techniques or consider the possibility of purchasing catastrophe bonds.

Mr. Pérez (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union was firmly in favour of building the resilience of States to deal with natural disasters. He would like to know how the work of the various agencies engaged in disaster relief could be better coordinated, how donors could be persuaded of the need to boost funding for disaster prevention mechanisms, and how all stakeholders could be encouraged to build such mechanisms into their development planning.

Mr. Jonas (Benin) said that the poorest and most vulnerable countries generally did not have the means to carry out disaster risk prevention activities. In Benin and neighbouring countries, farmers failed to provide sufficient produce to meet local needs, often because they grew cash crops and produce for export. He would like to know how Pakistan coordinated the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the United Nations with bilateral aid arrangements. He would also like to know to what extent the Jalin Merapi Community Radio station was directly involved in humanitarian aid distribution in times of disaster. Turning to the matter of measuring the effectiveness of disaster risk prevention plans, he asked what the price of a human life was.

Mr. Jay (Observer for Switzerland) asked how improved disaster response requirements could be woven into the post-2015 development agenda and to what areas donors should allocate disaster relief funds.

Mr. Lyngroth (Observer for Norway) said that the humanitarian response to disasters could only be improved through closer coordination with development agencies and a more proactive approach by national Governments. A broader donor base and more

effective funding mechanisms were needed. He would like to know how preparations for the post-Hyogo process, the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals could be used to foster a more comprehensive approach to risk, vulnerability and preparedness. He asked what challenges must be overcome in order to set up comprehensive frameworks.

Ms. Bibalou (Gabon) said that the preservation of forests and anti-desertification measures were critical for disaster prevention in the long term.

Mr. Kull (World Bank) said that the 2014 World Development Report would discuss the questions of the convergence of humanitarian and development work, proactive and systematic risk management, and a shared response from all levels of society to risk management challenges. Governments played a key role in providing an enabling environment for shared action. The report would highlight the importance of: avoiding unnecessary risk; providing incentives for institutions to make their own contingency plans; establishing permanent mechanisms with a long-term risk management mandate; ensuring flexibility within a predictable institutional framework; protecting the vulnerable; and promoting community self-reliance.

Mr. Sørensen (Director-General, European Community Humanitarian Office) said that the World Humanitarian Summit would be an appropriate forum for discussing coordination of humanitarian and development work. In many developing countries problems with agriculture posed serious challenges. Varied and sustainable forms of agriculture should be developed in the Sahel region and reforestation should be encouraged.

Mr. Idrees (Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan) said that coordination with United Nations relief agencies was conducted mainly at the federal level in Pakistan. Recommendations to the Government were made at monthly meetings attended by all stakeholders. In times of disaster, the Government co-chaired the appropriate response cluster. Sustainable development must be closely linked to the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Mr. Pratomo (Founder of Jalin Merapi Community Radio, Indonesia) said that community radio could be used for many purposes, including for making requests to donors for funding.

Mr. Bostrom (Director of the Future of Humanity Institute and the Programme on the Impacts of Future Technology, University of Oxford) said that it was difficult to place an absolute value on human lives. In terms of cost-effectiveness of resource allocation, it was more appropriate to consider "quality-adjusted life years". National health services and some charities conducted analyses to decide on questions such as whether it was preferable to save the lives of the young or the elderly and how to ensure the quality of life of those who were saved.

Ms. Amos (Moderator) said that the issues regarding the coordination of humanitarian and development work should be clarified before the World Humanitarian Summit took place. The poll announced at the opening of the meeting had asked which of four benefits of risk-management and vulnerability-reduction approaches participants considered to be the most important. The four options provided, and their results, were that such approaches helped to:

(a) Identify and tackle the root causes and vulnerabilities leading to humanitarian crises – 45.5 per cent;

(b) Rally critical stakeholders around a common agenda and framework for action – 7.3 per cent;

(c) Anticipate, prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises in a cost-effective manner – 14.5 per cent;

(d) Reduce the human and economic costs of disasters – 32.7 per cent.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

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6 August 2013

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Substantive session of 2013
Humanitarian segment

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 17 July 2013, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Khan (Vice-President) ..... (Pakistan)

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

Panel discussion: Promoting humanitarian innovation for improved response

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In the absence of Mr. Osorio (Colombia), Mr. Khan (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (E/2013/77-A/68/84 and E/2013/L.20)

Panel discussion: Promoting humanitarian innovation for improved response

The President said that technology was changing the nature of responses to humanitarian crises. During the 2010 floods in Pakistan, mobile phone technology had been used to help distribute emergency funds, thereby enabling 2.5 million families to meet their basic needs at the height of the catastrophe. International aid agencies must embrace innovation, learn from best practices at the regional and country levels and do more to involve affected communities.

He wished to invite the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to act as moderator.

Ms. Amos (Moderator) said that the number of situations requiring an international humanitarian response had doubled since 2000. At the same time, the digital divide was closing. Technology was being used to enable affected communities to articulate their needs more clearly and to seek resources. Innovation meant adopting not only technology but also new approaches to aid delivery. The emergence of the Digital Humanitarian Network and such initiatives as Souktel, which conducted fast, SMS-based polling and provided aid agencies with up-to-the-minute information, demonstrated the power of new technologies. Humanitarian aid agencies needed to embrace such changes.

Participants in the meeting were invited to take part in a poll via text message to share their views on the question: "Innovation in humanitarian action is most useful to …". The results would be available at the end of the meeting.

Ms. Harman (Director of Information Management and Situational Awareness, American Red Cross) said that the American Red Cross was becoming a facilitator of communications between people with needs and people with resources. Social media were at the heart of the digital operations centre that the organization had launched in Washington D.C. in 2012. Through social media platforms, the centre offered access to real-time assessments of crises and instant routing of messages to and from affected areas. More importantly, it made it possible to mobilize greater numbers of volunteer workers than had been hitherto possible. Through Twitter and similar platforms, it was possible to receive information from and tweet advice to people in areas that had, for example, been hit by tornados. Similarly, the system could be used to put people in disaster-struck areas in contact with one another. The digital operations centre was able to send situation reports to government bodies in real time. The language used in tweets was varied and colourful, but useful information on a disaster situation could frequently be extracted from them.

The centre had proved its effectiveness as an integral component of the disaster relief work of the American Red Cross when Hurricane Sandy had struck the United States in October 2012. It would continue to focus on real-time data collection and reporting, but could equally be used to train disaster workers versed in the use of social media and to manage and train volunteers. It was hoped that the work of the centre would be fully integrated with that of other disaster services through standard data-sharing processes and that the centre would be able to work more closely and effectively with grass-roots groups that used social media within their communities.

Ms. Rasmusson (Assistant Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP)) said that WFP had launched several innovative projects in the context of its

strategic shift from delivering food aid to providing food assistance. Its system of cash and voucher transfers had been introduced into projects in 49 countries, and a comprehensive software platform, SCOpe (System for Cash Operations) was being piloted. A smart card-based electronic voucher system using fingerprint verification and a mobile phone-based voucher system would soon be built into SCOpe.

WFP had embarked on a thorough review of its internal working methods and had found cost-effective solutions to several problems. Under a new system of advance financing facilities — essentially internal loans — it had become possible to allocate funds to projects even before donors' pledges had arrived. The introduction of a vehicle leasing programme had led to savings of more than US$ 3.5 million a year. The United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot network had five strategically placed warehouses around the world and used its scale and buying power to negotiate competitive prices with suppliers. The network was able to ship relief items to emergency locations anywhere in the world quickly and in a cost-efficient manner.

Mr. Osman (Managing Director of Star FM, Kenya), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that communication itself constituted a form of aid. The Star FM radio station had been established in Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya in 2006 to serve the refugee community. Operating round the clock, it produced a range of programmes, many of which focused on refugee and humanitarian issues. It broadcast in Somali and provided critical information to refugee communities. Broadcasts could be picked up via standard and solar-powered radios, Internet streaming and dedicated telephone landlines. The Souktel organization would be installing a system in Dadaab that would enable listeners to send text messages to the radio station for free. Two-way communication was one of the keys to Star FM's success. The station worked with aid agencies to trace missing persons, provided news from the agencies, and broadcast emergency information. Star FM had been advised to create a sister, non-profit organization through which it would be able to work more freely with international aid agencies. Insecurity was a growing problem in Dadaab refugee camp. The lack of electricity and poor mobile telephone coverage hampered the radio station's work.

Star FM broadcast the daily *Gargaar* ("Assistance") programme, a one-hour programme devoted to discussing humanitarian and refugee issues. A large share of the content was produced directly in the Dadaab refugee camp. The topics covered by the programme included the responsibilities of each agency in the various camps, return and repatriation procedures, the polio outbreak and vaccination process and the use of biometrics in food distribution.

A large-scale survey conducted to measure access to information in the country's refugee camps had found that some 53 per cent of respondents did not have enough information to make decisions, while over 74 per cent relied on radio broadcasts as their main source of information. The survey had also found that the ability of refugees to interact with aid providers was dependent on how long the refugees had been at the camp. The results had been presented to humanitarian actors and a report would be published outlining strategies to improve dialogue with local communities. Regular meetings, feedback sessions and focus groups were held across six camps to assess the impact of *Gargaar* and ensure that its content was relevant to the target audience. Listeners reported being better informed regarding services, while humanitarian actors noted a marked improvement in their interaction with camp inhabitants. Radio programmes also played an important part in ensuring that agencies were held accountable for their work.

He urged all humanitarian agencies to coordinate with local media to make information available to aid recipients and to build stronger relationships with the private sector. He called for the distribution of solar-powered radio sets and mobile phones so that

more refugees could receive the information that they needed without having to worry about access to electricity.

Speaking by video link from the studios of Star FM radio in Kenya, reporters **Ms. Sanbur**, **Mr. Sheik Mohamed** and **Mr. Sheik** discussed the impact of Star FM radio on life in Dadaab refugee camp. Prior to the launch of the station, they said that information about which agencies were operating in the camp or what services were available to refugees had been almost non-existent. Communication infrastructure had been so poor that even the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had had to mount a loudspeaker on a truck to address the inhabitants of the camp. Thanks to *Gargaar*, refugees now knew where to go for drinking water, health care and education services. They could also voice their needs and concerns. For example, the programme had aired a report on child labour in which interviews with children, parents, exploiters of child labour and representatives of Save the Children had been conducted. The report had introduced the concept of children's rights and explained the dangers of child labour. It had helped parents to understand that education was a more effective means of escaping poverty than sending children to work for a pittance. The programme served as an intermediary between agencies and aid recipients and the format made it possible to reach an often illiterate community.

Ms. Pean-Mevs (Haiti) said that in the wake of the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010, her Government had launched a humanitarian action plan in conjunction with the humanitarian agencies operating in the country. It had also updated national contingency plans to build resilience to disasters. Through the national system for risk and disaster management, public awareness was being raised about the need to follow safety instructions and design family emergency plans for the hurricane season. She urged humanitarian organizations to cooperate more closely with States on capacity-building.

Ms. Macrae (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said her Government was scaling up its investment in humanitarian innovation, which it saw as a core element of its humanitarian efforts. Citing the example of the Plumpy'Nut campaign against acute malnutrition, she said that innovation was not just about technology but also about rethinking business practices. Innovation required a tolerance of failure as well as an openness to challenges to the current humanitarian business model. Humanitarian actors needed to improve the way that they filtered ideas and to act more quickly on the ideas that they retained. When testing new ideas, donors and agencies should factor in the needs and situation of beneficiaries, document the lessons learned, and disseminate findings swiftly. She also recommended that innovation efforts should be focused on a few key areas, such as energy, data use and beneficiary engagement.

Ms. Gebremedhin (Observer for Finland) asked how the international community could promote innovation more systematically and how the panellists saw the role of donor countries in that regard. She also asked how the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group approached the issue of innovation. Lastly, she said that she would be glad to know how the American Red Cross screened and verified the data that it collected from social media.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) said that mobile phones were a good tool for reaching remote communities, but stressed that that was only feasible if mobile networks were reliable. He expressed concern that there was a technology imbalance between humanitarian agencies and national entities responsible for humanitarian action on the ground. He suggested that a database of innovative ideas and tools could be established to enable developing countries to select those ideas that best matched their specific needs and budgets. He urged the international community to help developing countries to obtain a minimum technology package in order to be on more even footing with each other and with donor countries.

Ms. Harman (Director of Information Management and Situational Awareness, American Red Cross) said that her organization used software that had a keyword search function for pinpointing actionable information. A team of three people who were experienced in sifting through vast amounts of data and using social media combed through the information as an additional failsafe. The organization also replied to tweets in order to engage the original tweeter and verify the information. She said that it would be difficult for the organization to share its digital information without making drastic changes to its operating procedures.

Ms. Rasmusson (Assistant Executive Director for Partnership and Governance Services of the World Food Programme (WFP)) said that donors should be encouraged to invest in innovation funds that were flexible enough to allow for the vagaries of testing new ideas. The private sector should be mobilized as a driver of innovation. She suggested that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group could host a platform to help inter-agency partners to find innovative solutions to humanitarian problems.

Mr. Osman (Managing Director of Star-FM, Kenya) said that public-private partnerships were crucial for the long-term financial sustainability of humanitarian interventions. Humanitarian agencies should consider establishing departments of innovation, with an innovation officer responsible for liaising with private and public partners. Cooperation between donors and deliverers of humanitarian aid and speedy communication between headquarters and field offices were also vital for the success of humanitarian operations.

Ms. Eliasson (Sweden) said that innovation was no longer an option, but a necessity. Beyond innovative technologies, new products, approaches and partnerships were needed. Action must be taken to empower and improve communication with beneficiaries. Data generated by mobile phone users and social media should be harnessed to monitor trends in vulnerable populations and adapt responses accordingly.

Ms. Berg (Observer for Norway) said that the private sector was playing a growing role in humanitarian innovation. While some off-the-shelf products could certainly be adapted for purpose, humanitarian agencies also needed to initiate their own innovation projects, in partnership with businesses. She asked the panellists how innovation could be financed and how humanitarian financing could be more flexible to facilitate cooperation with the business sector. She wished to know how humanitarian agencies dealt with the risk of failure when they were using innovative tools.

Mr. Andanje (Observer for Kenya) said that Star FM was a model of how innovation could serve refugees and society at large. He asked whether the issue of voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees from Kenya had been discussed with the refugees themselves and, if so, what their response had been.

Ms. De Clarens (Observer for the European Union) said that innovation was essential for better humanitarian service delivery in a fast-changing global environment. Although innovative processes had proved useful in operations to deliver food assistance and shelter, for example, there seemed to be resistance against a global roll-out of such processes. She wished to know how that resistance could be overcome.

Ms. Hamaguchi (Japan) said that innovation and cross-sectoral cooperation were equally important. During the 2011 earthquake in Japan, relief operations had been hampered because not all actors had been involved from the start. In the light of that experience, Japan was building a robust distribution system with the participation of all stakeholders. Preparedness was vital to maximizing the usefulness of new techniques.

Mr. Bessler (Observer for Switzerland) said that he wondered who "owned" innovation. He would be glad to know which way the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

Working Group was driving innovation and whether it reached out to the private sector. He also wanted to know who would be responsible for setting standards and controlling the quality of innovative mechanisms and processes.

Mr. Piantini (Dominican Republic) said that his country was increasingly affected by extreme weather events linked to climate change. Using innovative technologies, local communities had invoked their right to protection. That, in turn, had helped to improve the country's emergency response and preparedness capacity. The result had been a significant fall in the number of disaster-related deaths.

Mr. Kent (United States of America) asked whether the existence of innovative information tools had changed decision-making processes during emergency response operations. He also wished to know how humanitarian agencies ascertained the veracity of information provided by social and other media, especially in complex emergencies.

Mr. Corliss (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that innovation in the field had always existed, often without the knowledge of headquarters, as innovators feared being stifled by bureaucracy. He was pleased with the current trends regarding the creation of an enabling environment for innovation. Within UNHCR, the focus was on highlighting existing innovations in the organization, connecting innovators at the field level and providing access to innovation expertise outside UNHCR. One example of innovative cooperation was the development of a new shelter prototype, the "Refugee Housing Unit". The prototype had been created in cooperation with the Swedish foundation SVID (Stiftelsen Svensk Industridesign) and the IKEA Foundation and would be field-tested in Ethiopia shortly.

Mr. Castro Grande (International Telecommunications Union (ITU)) said that wide broadband coverage was crucial for bridging the North-South and urban-rural digital divide. New technology must be accessible and affordable and States should include national broadband plans in their development and humanitarian programming.

Mr. Osman (Managing Director of Star FM, Kenya) said that the Kenyan Government had decided to repatriate Somali refugees in the light of the deteriorating security situation at the Dadaab refugee camp. The decision was understandable, but the refugees were not ready to leave. Most refugees came from southern Somalia, where the security situation remained fragile. Some humanitarian agencies had appealed to the Kenyan Government to reverse its decision. Many refugees had lived in Dadaab for two decades and a lot of them had been born there but had not been integrated into Kenyan society. Youth unemployment was a major factor in insecurity in the camp, as access to further education or employment outside the camp was denied. Many young people saw no other option than to get involved in gang activities or to join the militia. UNHCR had set up an information, communication and technology hub in each camp to provide refugees with access to the Internet.

Ms. Rasmusson (Assistant Executive Director for Partnership and Governance Services, World Food Programme (WFP)) said that innovation processes must be co-owned. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group could play a role in innovation and information sharing, but the main drivers of innovation were humanitarian field staff. Communication between the field and headquarters must be improved. Information sharing, including feedback mechanisms for beneficiaries, had had a significant impact on decision-making in operations and programming.

Securing private sector financing did not necessarily involve going to ask for money. It meant identifying common objectives and opportunities and building creative partnerships. The members of the humanitarian community should not compete over ideas, but share and cooperate with one another for the sake of beneficiaries.

Ms. Harman (Director of Information Management and Situational Awareness, American Red Cross) said that the long-standing cooperation between the American Red Cross and the Dell corporation underscored the importance of humanitarian actors' capacity to engage with the private sector. Innovation could only happen through cooperation and the tearing down of institutional walls. Identifying appropriate ways to integrate social media and new technology into established disaster response processes remained a challenge. Information provided through social media had been used to adapt service delivery responses during the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and Hurricane Sandy. The earthquake in Haiti had been a powerful reminder of the importance of modern communication tools. It had led to a policy shift within her organization towards greater empowerment for local communities, with the American Red Cross working as a facilitator.

Ms. Amos (Moderator), speaking in her capacity as Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), said that the existence of a gap between relief and sustainable development had been widely recognized. It made resilience-building and joint action by humanitarian and development agencies all the more necessary. OCHA had published a document entitled: *Humanitarianism in the Network Age*, which identified information as a basic need and highlighted the need to build capacity in that area. OCHA brought together different actors to facilitate the shift towards an innovation enabling environment. It had developed a partnership with the World Economic Forum, which was at the forefront of innovation.

The President, summing up, said that a raft of innovative tools and measures could be used to help prevent and manage disasters. The issues of affordability, screening of information and financing would require further consideration. The emerging innovation paradigm would be co-owned by diverse actors and entities, which would use different portals and platforms and work to achieve synergies.

Ms. Amos (Moderator), presenting the outcome of the poll on humanitarian innovation for improved response, said that 22 per cent of participants had indicated that innovation was most useful for improving communication; 24 per cent thought that it was most useful for utilizing new technology developments; 27 per cent thought that it was particularly helpful for developing new tools and services; and another 27 per cent thought that it created a culture where humanitarian organizations were able to identify problems more accurately.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.